

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD (POLAD FOR AMBASSADOR MARSHALL GREEN)

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SUBJECT: QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

1. SUMMARY: THE ALP SUFFERED A DEVASTATING DEFEAT IN THE QUEENSLAND STATE ELECTION 7 DEC 74. THERE WAS A SWING OF APPROXIMATELY 12 PERCENT TO THE NATIONAL AND LIBERAL PARTIES IN THE STATE WHEN CONTRASTED WITH THE LAST STATE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN 1972. THIS SWING WILL CAUSE THE ALP TO LOSE AT LEAST 19 AND POSSIBLY 22 OF ITS 33 SEATS IN THE ONE HOUSE, STATE PARLIAMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. THE ALP'S CRUSHING DEFEAT IN QUEENSLAND IS BEING PORTRAYED AS A MAJOR PERSONAL SETBACK FOR PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM. THE PRIME MINISTER AND VIRTUALLY HIS ENTIRE CABINET CAMPAIGNED EXTENSIVELY THROUGHOUT QUEENSLAND MAKING THE ELECTION VIRTUALLY A FEDERAL ONE. THE PRIME MINISTER'S MAIN POINT WAS QUEENSLAND PREMIER BJELKE-PETERSON'S NON-COOPERATION AND OPPOSITION TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT POLICIES. IT APPEARS MOST PROBABLE THAT THE ELECTION IN EFFECT REPRESENTS A QUEENSLAND REFERENDUM ON THE ALP'S FEDERAL POLICIES.

3. BJELKE-PETERSON'S NATIONAL PARTY HAS PICKED UP AT LEAST 6 SEATS AND THE LIBERAL PARTY HAS PICKED UP AT LEAST 9 SEATS. THE MOST

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LIKELY NEW LINEUP IN THE QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT IS NATIONAL PARTY

36, LIBERAL PARTY 30, INDEPENDENTS 2, ALP 10-14. PREFERENCES SIZEABLE ENOUGH TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE FINAL OUTCOME IN CLOSELY CONTESTED DISTRICTS IN THIS PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM ARE STILL BEING COUNTED.

4. THE NATIONAL AND LIBERAL PARTY COALITION INCREASED ITS TOTAL SHARE OF THE VOTE BY 16.5 PERCENT - 7.8 FOR THE NATIONAL PARTY - 8.7 FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY. THE SWING TO THE COALITION IN THE POPULATED SOUTHEASTERN ZONE AROUND BRISBANE WAS 17.8 PERCENT - 11.1 PERCENT WENT TO THE LIBERALS - 6.7 PERCENT WENT TO THE NATIONAL PARTY.

5. THE ELECTION DEMONSTRATED ACROSS THE BOARD DISENCHANTMENT WITH FEDERAL POLICIES IN ALL AGE AND REGIONAL GROUPINGS, INCLUDING THE 18-21 YEAR OLD GROUP AND THE HEAVILY URBANIZED SOUTHEASTERN ZONE. THE UNPRECEDENTED BAD PRESS FOR THE ALP WAS EXACERBATED BY THE CONTINUING COVERAGE OF THE MOROSI SCANDAL. DESPITE QUEENSLAND'S RELATIVE PROSPERITY IT APPEARS THAT THE ELECTORATE IS CONVINCED THAT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IS BAD AND THAT FEDERAL POLICIES HAVE HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON QUEENSLAND'S ECONOMY.

6. THE VOLATILITY OF THE VOTE SURPRISED ALL THE PARTIES. BOTH COALITION PARTIES WON FAR MORE SEATS THAN EITHER HAD EXPECTED, AND THEY WON THESE SEATS FROM THE ALP RATHER THAN FROM EACH OTHER. THE GERRYMANDERED STRUCTURE OF THE ELECTION DISTRICTS COUNTED HEAVILY AGAINST THE LIBERALS AS WELL AS THE ALP, AND AS A RESULT THE RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE COALITION PARTIES IN PARLIAMENT REMAINS UNCHANGED.

7. THE ALP'S PARLIAMENTARY LEADERSHIP IN QUEENSLAND WAS DECIMATED. ALP LEADER PERCY TUCKER LOST HIS SEAT AS DID ALP DEPUTY LEADER FRED NEWTON. HOWEVER, SOME OF THE MOST VIGOROUS ALP MEMBERS IN THE QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT INCLUDING TOM BURNS, THE FORMER ALP FEDERAL PRESIDENT, HAVE RETAINED THEIR SEATS. BURNS WILL BE A STRONG CANDIDATE FOR ALP PARLIAMENTARY LEADER.

8. COALITION PARTIES MUST NOW GO THROUGH THE DIFFICULT TASK OF AWARDED MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS. THE FRICTION ARISING FROM THIS PROCESS AS WELL AS FROM COMPETITION BETWEEN THE TWO COALITION PARTIES IN THE ELECTION MAY WELL MEAN THAT INTRA-COALITION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POLITICS WILL PREDOMINATE IN THE NEXT PARLIAMENT.

9. CONSUL FRIEDMAN ASSISTED IN PREPARING THIS ASSESSMENT AND WILL PROVIDE MORE DETAILS ON THE ELECTION.

10. COMMENTS ON IMPACT OF QUEENSLAND ELECTION ON NATIONAL POLITICAL SCENE FOLLOW BY SEPTTEL.
SIMPSON

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